

Study #2 Recreation Safety Assessment

November 28, 2001

1.0 Introduction/Background

This study will focus on developing quantitative and qualitative data and conclusions pertaining to recreational public safety and related needs in the Study Area.

2.0 Study Objective

The objective of this study is to identify recreation safety issues and concerns within the Study Area. This study will assess current and historic recreation-related safety incidents and trends, as well as recreation safety-related management policies and procedures. Recreation safety is particularly important to visitors, recreation providers, and managers within the Study Area.

3.0 Relationship to Relicensing/Need for the Study

This study is needed because FERC regulations require a comprehensive recreation plan. The plan must address significant safety issues and concerns that will be incorporated into the development and operations and maintenance (O&M) programs of the plan. This study addresses Issue Statement R2—adequacy of public safety at the Study Area recreation facilities. It specifically addresses Issues RE 49, 92, and 93.

4.0 Study Area

The Study Area includes Lake Oroville, the lands and waters within and adjacent to (1/4 mile) the FERC project boundary, and adjacent lands, facilities and areas with a clear project nexus. The following developed recreation areas and sites are included:

- Thermalito Afterbay facilities
- Thermalito North Forebay facilities
- Thermalito South Forebay facilities
- Diversion Pool facilities
- Spillway Boat Ramp/Overflow Camping
- Dam/Overlook Area
- Lake Oroville Visitor Center
- Bidwell Canyon Marina and other nearby facilities
- Car-Top Boat Launch Areas (BLAs) such as Stringtown, Dark Canyon, Foreman Creek, Nelson Bar, and Vinton Gulch
- Low flow channel of the Feather River
- Clay Pit State Vehicle Recreation Area (SVRA)
- Feather River fish hatchery (public areas)
- Loafer Creek facilities
- Lime Saddle Marina and other nearby facilities
- Foreman Creek Boat-In Campsite (BIC)
- Enterprise BLA
- Craig Saddle BIC
- Bloomer Primitive BIC
- Goat Ranch BIC
- Oroville Wildlife Area (OWA)
- Selected Primary Equestrian Trailheads
- Selected Primary Mountain Bike/Hiking Trailheads

5.0 General Approach

This study will represent a quantitative and qualitative assessment of recreation public safety within the Study Area and development of a set of recommendations to be considered during the relicensing process. It will investigate and analyze recreation public safety issues, incidents, and trends at project recreation facilities and use areas. Tasks included in this study are presented below.

Task 1—Research Boating Safety Issues

This task will research boating issues within the Study Area, including boating accident statistics, boating law enforcement problems, and boating regulations and management. Reservoir depth, safety concerns associated with water releases, other dangerous boating areas, and the need for increased marine patrol will also be studied. Much of the research for this task will be done as part of Study #7—Reservoir Boating Survey. Results from Study #7 that specifically address recreation public safety will be incorporated into this study.

Task 2—Research and Analyze Recreation Facility Regulations and Enforcement Issues

This task will research recreation facility regulation and local law enforcement violation issues within the Study Area specific to land-based recreation areas, encompassing recreation facility rules/regulations and violation statistics; recreation facility law enforcement problems; and recreation facility regulations and management. Recreation facility regulations will be obtained from DWR, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). Current and historical local ordinance violations and enforcement problems at project recreation facilities will be obtained from the Butte County Sheriff's Office, as well as from DWR and DPR. Recreation facility regulation violations and law enforcement problems will identify the types of violations and yearly incidents at Study Area recreation facilities and surrounding areas. Any additional information regarding regulation violations and law enforcement obtained from the Butte County Sheriff's Office, DWR, and/or DPR will be summarized. Other issues of concern to the general public will be solicited in Study #13—Recreation Surveys (visitor conflicts).

Task 3—Research and Analyze Local Health/Injury Issues

This task will research health/injury issues within the Study Area, including recreation facility accidents, Emergency Medical Service (EMS) coverage and response time, proximity to healthcare providers, cell phone coverage, and recreation facility policies and procedures regarding health/injury issues. Recreation facility policies and procedures and accident reports will be obtained from DWR and DPR. EMS coverage data and proximity to healthcare providers will be obtained from the local ambulance service and area hospitals/healthcare centers. Accidents and other injuries/illnesses will be categorized and reported by year. Other possible health/injury issues will be identified and discussed as they relate to the Study Area.

Task 4—Research and Analyze Fire Issues

This task will research forest fire issues within the Study Area, including historical occurrence of forest fires, future threats, and evacuation/rescue procedures. The historical occurrence and future threats of forest fires will be obtained from the United States Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the California Department of Forestry (CDF). Procedures associated with forest fires will be obtained from USFS, BLM, CDF, DWR, and DPR. All information will be summarized and other possible issues regarding forest fires will be reported.

Task 5—Develop Recreation Public Safety Action Considerations

This task will summarize the previous four tasks and identify key recreation public safety issues that may need to be specifically addressed in the Study Area management plan. DWR, DPR, and the local sheriff will be consulted to develop a range of potential actions to address key issues. These potential corrective actions should be considered by DWR during the relicensing process.

6.0 Results and Products/Deliverables

Results

The results of this study will provide insight into Study Area recreation safety issues and concerns. Historical and current data regarding boating accidents (Study #7—Reservoir Boating Survey), recreation facility accidents/incidents, and any other incidents requiring emergency services will be summarized and qualitatively analyzed for trends. Analysis of EMS coverage, cell phone coverage, and recreation safety policies and procedures will focus on existing preventative measures and responses to recreation safety incidents. Additionally, a list of potential recreation public safety actions will be developed and should be considered by DWR during the relicensing process in order to ensure a high level of safety among Study Area visitors. Finally, visitor responses to selected survey questions (Studies #7 and #13) will be analyzed to determine if additional recreation safety issues emerge which were not discussed/considered in other areas of the study.

Products/Deliverables

The following product will be developed for this study:

- Draft Final Report

The report will contain an executive summary; an introduction with goals and objectives; methods; results; and a discussion.

7.0 Coordination and Implementation Strategy

Coordination with Other Resource Areas/Studies

This study will require coordination with Study #7—Reservoir Boating Survey, and Study #13—Recreation Surveys.

Issues, Concerns, Comments Tracking, and/or Regulatory Compliance Requirements

This study addresses Issue Statement R2—adequacy of public safety at the Study Area recreation facilities. It specifically addresses Issues RE 49, 92, and 93.

8.0 Study Schedule

Data collection: June through August 2002.

Data analysis and report writing: September 2002 through January 2003.

Draft Final Report due: February 2003.